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“There’s Nothing That Compares to it”: A Grounded Theoretical Analysis of the Experiences  
of Police Hostage and Crisis Negotiators

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## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

Hostage and crisis negotiators serve a vital function within society by resolving hostage/crisis incidents. This role, performed by specially trained police ‘volunteers’ helps to prevent numerous fatalities, and forms an important part of the modern policing repertoire. There is limited research that identifies the experiences of police officers that dedicate their lives to saving others by volunteering in this capacity. The current research, therefore, provides an insight into this fundamental police role using negotiator’s personal narratives.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

This study consisted of an exploratory qualitative grounded theoretical analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 negotiators from nine English police forces.

### **Findings**

The analysis revealed three primary, seven secondary and 23 tertiary categories that form a conceptual model of the negotiator experience. The three primary categories consisted of ‘negotiator positives’, ‘negotiator negatives’ and ‘negotiator ambivalences’, which provide an insight into the experiences and identities of negotiators in England.

### **Practical implications**

The findings identify several positive factors that could be used to market the role more effectively within police forces and enhance future recruitment processes. Equally, the findings highlight several operational and organisational issues that have a negative impact on the negotiator experience. The findings are, therefore, discussed in light of the practical implications for negotiator training/continuing professional development, policy and practice.

**Originality/value**

This paper depicts the findings from one of the first qualitative analyses of negotiator experiences and provides a unique insight into the negotiator role from an Anglo-centric perspective.

**Keywords**

Hostage and crisis negotiation, crisis negotiation, police negotiators, crisis negotiators, grounded theory, police officer experiences.

**Paper type**

Research paper.

## Introduction

### Police Culture and Identity

As an entity, policing is garnering much public and political interest due to the ever-changing ‘terrain’ that officers are being exposed to and the pressure to maintain standards whilst simultaneously dealing with budget cuts and increasing demand for policing response. In light of these pressures, policing is an area that has been heavily researched due to its unique and challenging nature, with researchers attempting to understand the policing context and the cultural parameters that surround the policing environment. The majority of this research has tended to focus on policing in the isolated context of the police occupational role, with an emphasis on police officer performance and on-duty conduct (House, 2013). There is a plethora of research that discusses the existence of a ‘police culture’ (Bayley and Bitner, 1984; Chan, 1996; Cochran and Bromley, 2003; Crank, 1998; Farkas and Manning, 1997; Fielding, 1988; Kappeler *et al.*, 1994) from a variety of perspectives, including reference to the fairly interchangeable concepts of ‘cop culture’ (Reiner, 2010); ‘police sub-culture’ (Waddington, 1999) and the ‘police mind’ (Fielding and Fielding, 1991). In a broad sense, police culture refers to a police officer’s attitudes, behaviour and work ethic (Scaramella *et al.*, 2011) that are specific to a policing context and are thought to be instilled/reinforced as a result of organisational socialisation.

Research has also identified the existence of ‘sub-cultures’ within police organisations that have been generated on the basis of ‘distinct experiences associated with specific structural positions’ (Reiner, 2000, p. 116) including police force, rank level and specialised department (Alderson, 1979; Chan, 1996; Reiner, 2000). Reuss-Ianni (1983), for example, identified different types of police sub-culture amongst what he referred to as “management cops” and “street cops” whereby “different aspects of the overall social world of the police are given

different inflections depending on one's rank" (Herbert, 1998, p. 344-345). Police officers have also been broadly differentiated on the basis of "type of officer" (Brown, 1981; Muir, 1977; Reiner, 1978); whereby different officer groups (and their associated sub-cultures) have been identified based on their dominant attitudes toward the public and police work (i.e. the extent to which they are connected to the public, are willing to embrace the use of coercive force, and their endorsement of an ethos of adventure and danger) (Herbert, 1998).

Research relating to the experiences and potential sub-cultures associated with specialist roles is less abundant, and the potential impact of specific roles on police officer identity is not currently understood. It is unclear, for example, whether specialist roles (i.e. firearms, dog handling, criminal investigation department (CID), hostage and crisis negotiation (HCNn), etc.) generate different meanings for police officers as a result of their specific nature/context. The extant research in this area has tended to originate from the United States, with limited research having been carried out into police Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams. Kraska and Paulsen (1997), for example, studied Police Paramilitary Units (PPUs) (known as SWAT teams in common parlance) and identified a number of cultural themes that were unique to these specialised police units. Themes included the existence of a distinct militaristic culture, a preoccupation with danger, pleasure in engaging with paramilitary activities, and a perception of PPU as an "elite" form of police. Other research has focused on team dynamics and the impact of team implicit coordination on SWAT team performance (Marques-Quintero, Curral, Passos, & Lewis, 2013) and the experiences of female SWAT team members (Dodge, Valcor, & Gomez, 2011), however, there is very little research dedicated to understanding other specialist police units/teams. More recently, work by Young, Henington and Eggleston (2018) has focused on trying to identify competencies of SWAT personnel by exploring personality traits, cognitive emotion regulation styles and decision-making styles of SWAT officers, HCNs and patrol officers across the United States, providing insight into the

characteristics of officers that perform specialist roles from a quantitative perspective. However, to the authors' knowledge, there has been no research conducted that explores the experiences of police officers who are trained as hostage and crisis negotiators (HCNs) and the meaning assigned to this role from a personal and professional perspective.

### **Hostage and Crisis Negotiator Research Contextualised**

The majority of HCNs in England are police officers who perform this role in a voluntary capacity, alongside their day-to-day role. Whilst these officers perform negotiation as an adjunct role, they constitute part of a highly specialised team, having completed an intensive set of training to equip them to respond to a spectrum of incidents ranging from suicidal individuals to kidnap and extortion cases (see Grubb, 2016; Grubb, Brown, Hall, & Bowen, 2019a). Police officers who apply to become HCNs often have to meet extensive selection criteria (which varies from country to country) and have to complete a rigorous assessment and training process in order to qualify as operational HCNs (see Grubb, 2016; Grubb, Brown, Hall, & Bowen, 2018). Within the UK, there is a small delegation of officers who are employed as police HCNs on a full time basis within the Hostage and Crisis Negotiation Units (based in Police Scotland, the Metropolitan Police and Greater Manchester Police), however, the vast majority of HCNs operate on a rotational on-call basis, whereby they are on call for a period of one week in five (or six) depending on the size of the HCN cadre within the force. When on call, they can be deployed at any point, day or night, which often involves working long and unsociable hours. They frequently encounter situations that involve high levels of risk and potential for harm to themselves and others. As such, the HCN role is one that requires dedication, resilience and commitment, and it is prudent to suggest that a role that frequently involves situations where life hangs in the balance is likely to contribute to the identity of the police officers that perform this role.

Research focused on the discipline of HCNn has adopted a variety of perspectives, with the majority of work being dedicated to understanding the communicative techniques that can be used to de-escalate crisis situations and help to resolve hostage/crisis scenarios peacefully. Authors (constituting both academics and practitioners alike) have developed a variety of models to guide HCN practice in theatre. These models include (amongst others): the STEPS model (Kelln and McMurtry, 2007); the four-phase model of hostage negotiation (Madrigal *et al.*, 2009); the Behavioral Change Stairway Model (BCSM) (Vecchi *et al.*, 2005); and the Behavioral Influence Stairway Model (BISM) (Van Hasselt *et al.*, 2008; Vecchi, 2009; Vecchi *et al.*, 2005); the S.A.F.E. model for resolving hostage and crisis incidents (Hammer, 2007); the cylindrical model of crisis communications (Taylor, 2002); and the D.I.A.M.O.N.D. model of hostage and crisis negotiation (Grubb, 2016). These models have informed the training of HCNs internationally, with most emphasis being placed on the BCSM which was initially developed by the Crisis Negotiation Unit of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBICNU) (Vecchi *et al.*, 2005) and the BISM (Van Hasselt *et al.*, 2008; Vecchi, 2009; Vecchi *et al.*, 2005). These models have undoubtedly provided a means of operational support to HCNs all over the world, providing insight into effective crisis communication strategies and techniques that when applied appropriately enhance the likelihood of a peaceful resolution to a hostage/crisis incident.

Whilst research in this domain has tended to focus on understanding the strategies, styles and techniques used by HCNs and models of HCNn have been developed to guide HCN practice (see Grubb, 2010), there is a lack of research into the experiences of HCNs in terms of their specialist role and being part of a HCN cadre. The authors assert that the conditions under which HCNs are placed whilst being thrust into a potentially chaotic and life-threatening hostage or crisis situation may result in the development of a unique sub-culture for those officers involved. The high-profile nature and competitiveness involved in joining a HCN team



has been described by Vecchi (2002, p. 2) in the United States (US) as resulting in “team members who have a high degree of solidarity, confidence, and esprit-de-corps for their unit” especially when placed in the context of a shared team-related culture and perspectives, however, it would appear that this is an anecdotally informed opinion as opposed to a specific empirically-derived research finding. It is also unclear whether this assertion holds true for HCNs based outside of the US, as Vecchi’s analysis is undoubtedly based on his own experience as a FBI HCN. Apart from this brief reference to the team dynamics associated with the HCN role, the authors have been unable to locate any published research that addresses the experiences of HCNs or the impact of this specialist police role on police officer identity. In addition to this void within the literature, there is no research to date that empirically explores the HCN organisational set up and operational experiences of HCNs in England or maps out best practice/areas for improvement from a research-informed context. The current study provides a formal forum for HCN experiences to directly inform practice and to develop recommendations for changes to policy/practice on the basis of common experiences encountered by English HCNs, thereby generating an opportunity for research to directly inform policing practice in the future.

The aim of the current study was therefore to address these gaps in the literature base by analysing the experiences of operationally active HCNs from a variety of metropolitan and rural police forces in England. The findings will have direct relevance for the discipline by helping to understand what it means to be a HCN, highlighting areas of good practice and areas for improvement, and building a picture of the Anglo-centric HCN experience through the eyes of those who perform this unique and specialist role. The specific objectives of the study were: 1) to develop a model of HCNn by providing an insight into the experiences of English HCNs, and 2) to make recommendations for changes in HCNn policy/practice. The specific research

questions addressed were: 1) what is it like to be a HCN in England? 2) what types of experiences do HCNs have? and 3) does being a HCN impact on a police officer's identity?

## **Method**

### **Design**

This study utilised a qualitative research design which consisted of the qualitative analysis of data gathered during semi-structured interviews with 15 operationally active HCNs. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed using the process of Grounded Theory, whereby categories of meaning were progressively identified, refined and integrated using initial and focused coding in order to develop a theory that is grounded in the data (as directed by Charmaz, 2006).

### **Participants**

Interviewees consisted of a sub-sample of participants who took part in an earlier quantitative phase of the research (see Grubb, 2016; Grubb, Brown, & Hall, 2015, 2017). Purposive sampling (in the form of maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990)) was used to identify 15 HCNs that were most relevant for the progress of data collection/development of theory (Morse, 2007) and demonstrated a wide range of HCN perspectives (as advocated by Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Interviewees consisted of 10 male and 5 female HCNs between the ages of 41 and 54 from nine English police forces (six rural/three metropolitan). Seven of the participants were currently performing Criminal Investigation Department (CID) roles and eight of the participants were from uniformed policing roles, with represented ranks varying from Sergeant to Superintendent. Nine of the interviewees had completed both the regional and national negotiator training courses, three had completed only the regional training course and three had completed only the national training course. Seven of the interviewees were trained as HNCs, 13 were red centre trained (to respond to kidnap and extortion cases) and two

were qualified as Gold Negotiator Advisors. HCN length of experience ranged from 24-195 months, with interviewees reporting having responded to between 8-200 incidents. Throughout the results section, each interviewee is depicted by an alphanumerical code which represents their interview letter, gender, force number and length of service in months as a HCN (i.e., A:M:1:156 refers to Interview A; Male HCN; Force Number 1; and 156 Months of Service as a HCN) as a means of contextualising the excerpts presented.

## Measures

**Demographic questionnaire.** Participants completed questions relating to their age, gender, ethnicity, force, rank, current position/role, length of service as a police officer, HCN training/qualification levels, length of service as a HCN and number of incidents dealt with as a HCN.

**Semi-structured interview schedule.** The interview schedule was initially developed by the first author on the basis of the gaps within the existing literature base relating to HCNs. The overarching research questions generated by the literature review were used to guide the broad areas of interview coverage and to identify specific questions. The initial interview schedule was then refined further by discussions with the other authors. The final interview schedule devised by the researchers broadly focused on seven areas that were identified as lacking in coverage within the extant negotiation literature (i.e. recruitment and selection, training and continuing professional development (CPD), operational experiences, decision-making, strategies/techniques and skills utilised, and support structures available to/utilised by HCNs). After the initial interview, minor changes were made to the interview schedule to enhance overall flow of the questions and to add additional questions that related to content generated within the initial interview (i.e. within the first interview, the interviewee freely discussed his motivations for performing the role and quite passionately described the benefits he obtained from being a HCN; as such, additional questions were incorporated to address the

motivations behind becoming a negotiator). The current paper reports on the findings relating specifically to discussions around operational experiences and decision-making processes during HCN deployment, as these narratives generated the categories used to develop the HCN experience model. Exemplar interview questions included “Can you describe the most recent incident that you have been involved in? What happened? How did you respond and what was the outcome?”; “What are the decision-making processes involved in negotiating crisis incidents?”; “What are the potential problems that you encounter when negotiating?”; “What do you get out of your role as a negotiator?” and “Why do you do it?”

### **Procedure**

Ethical approval was sought and gained from the Coventry University ethics committee prior to data collection and permission was granted by each Force Lead Hostage Negotiator Coordinator (HNC). All interviews were carried out at the HCN’s place of work and lasted between 45-130 minutes (with a mean interview length of 87 minutes). The interviews were orthographically transcribed by an external transcription company and transcripts were emailed to each interviewee for veracity verification and sanitisation prior to data analysis.

### **Analysis**

Data were coded by hand in line with a grounded theory constructivist framework. Open coding in the form of line-by-line coding was completed on the entire set of transcripts in chronological order. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and comparing the data across the transcripts, the identified concepts were then further refined into broad level tentative categories that provided meaning to the data. Open coding was performed in parallel with memoing (Flick, 2009; Lempert, 2007) and clustering (Charmaz, 2006; Rico, 1983) techniques in order to group similar concepts into categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Focused coding was used to refine the three hundred and twenty concepts initially identified into more directed, selective and conceptual categories (Glaser, 1978),

resulting in the development of the following unique five micro-models: 1) The nature and characteristics of hostage and crisis negotiation model; 2) The hostage and crisis negotiator journey model; 3) The hostage and crisis negotiator experience model; 4) The D.I.A.M.O.N.D. model of hostage and crisis negotiation; and 5) The self-perceived successful hostage and crisis negotiator model. The current paper addresses the findings relating to the third micro-model listed above. Please refer to Grubb (2016), Grubb et al. (2018), and Grubb, Brown, Hall, and Bowen (2019a, 2019b) for findings relating to the other micro-models.

By identifying the most significant and/or frequently occurring categories that made the most analytic sense (Charmaz, 2006), focused coding refined the 51 initial broad categories/concepts that related to the current model being discussed into three primary, seven secondary, and 23 tertiary categories (please see Table 1). Coding was completed once the cross-comparative process demonstrated saturation of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and no further concepts or categories were identified. Axial coding was used to identify how the categories related to one another in a hierarchical sense and conceptual maps/diagrams were used to help integrate categories and to produce substantive theory (as suggested by Clarke (2003, 2005)).

## Results

[Insert Table 1 Here]

**Negotiation positives.** The first primary category relates to the positive aspects of the role, which were divided into two secondary categories: ‘The negotiator family’ and ‘Negotiation as personally and professionally rewarding’, each of which was further divided into tertiary categories as outlined below.

***The negotiator family.*** The language HCNs used suggests that the cadre acts or operates as a family, with HCNs feeling heavily supported by other team members. The cadre

was portrayed as a small, closely-knit group that has a strong team ethos. HCNn was conceptualised throughout the interviews as a team discipline, reliant on effective teamwork to be successful. Three tertiary subcategories emerged, bearing some resemblance to the concept of the “tribe” referred to by Junger (2016) whereby a group offers strength and support, particularly to those within the military or emergency services.

*The cadre as supportive.* Most interviewees [ $n = 9$ ] described feeling supported by other HCNs and portrayed an environment whereby they “watch each other’s back” (G:M:4:123). This was particularly apparent when they experienced negative outcomes and was viewed as a vital coping mechanism that enabled them to deal with the trauma associated with fatalities: “...when we’ve had people die... people who’ve jumped, or committed suicide, or hung themselves... we support each other and we kick in and everyone checks everyone’s ok...” (B:M:2:195).

*Camaraderie and comradeship.* Camaraderie is defined as a form of “mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together” (Camaraderie n.d.). Described by most interviewees [ $n = 9$ ], it was highlighted as a positive and important component: “...we’re quite a close bunch... you work with the same team... and you tend to link in with those quite closely... we know each other quite well... we’re all pretty much friends, really (F:M:4:111). One interviewee’s narrative epitomised this by suggesting that the team ethos served to supersede the rank structure of the police (i.e. a metaphorical removal of epaulettes) and enabled all team members to be viewed on an equal (and somewhat unique) footing.

...we all have an equal say. Rank doesn’t exist... we’re all first names. There’s a... chief super sitting in there... couple of superintendents, chief inspectors, inspectors and we’re all on first name terms and we will all react to support whoever... And that’s quite unique within this organisation (G:M:4:123).

*Negotiation as a team discipline.* HCNn was consistently portrayed [ $n = 9$ ] as a discipline that would not function without the support of team members. The importance of teamwork was both highlighted as the bedrock of HCNn and conceptualised as a positive aspect of the role.

One of the first things they say on your national course is this... ‘have we got any individuals here?’ If we’ve got any individuals, you might as well get up and leave, because it’s not about you; it’s about the team thing (C:F:2:96).

Team members played a number of roles that included supporting the primary HCN to ensure his/her welfare: “...making sure people have got drinks, people have got something to eat, people are warm enough; do they need a break?” (C:F:2:96), and providing suggestions for how the primary HCN might approach the next part of the negotiation. Some interviewees [ $n = 4$ ], for example, described a form of reflective working whereby they would often bounce ideas off each other in order to direct the negotiation effectively: “...it’s quite useful, because you’ve got the team round you, so you come off the phone, and you’ve had someone who’s... been making a note of what’s been said, right, where are we? And you have that team discussion...” (J:F:6:110).

*Negotiation as personally and professionally rewarding.* The perceived personal/professional rewards could be clearly categorised into four secondary categories, as described below.

*Negotiation as challenging.* HCNn was conceptualised by some interviewees [ $n = 5$ ] as being rewarding as a result of providing an intellectual challenge. One interviewee described HCNn as a “constant battle of wits” (G:M:4:123) that he found personally rewarding, whereas

another referred to enjoyment obtained from trying to form a relationship with a subject<sup>1</sup> that often posed a challenge:

...trying to find that little thing that's going to give you some kind of rapport... with somebody who you otherwise might have nothing... in common with at all... the challenge I actually enjoy is... finding that thing that you can both talk about... (F:M:4:111).

*Opportunity for public interface and interaction* was perceived as rewarding for interviewees who were in roles with limited public interface [ $n = 6$ ]. The role was described by one senior-ranking HCN as an opportunity for him to be “down the coalface” (A:M:1:156) and get involved with “hands on policing”. Whereas another referred to the opportunity to remain ‘in touch’ with the public:

...as a PC you will go to people in lots of different crises... I don't get to those jobs. So what it personally gives me is the reminder of how to speak to people, how not to speak to people and just that snapshot into what is reality for their life (I:M:6:84).

*Negotiation as emotionally rewarding.* Most interviewees [ $n = 8$ ] experienced a variety of positive emotions, often referring to feelings of excitement and thrill. One described a “massive high” and “great feeling” (A:M:1:156); whereas others described the “adrenalin rush” (J:F:6:110) or “elation” (O:F:9:36; H:F:5:50) felt when an incident had been successfully resolved. These findings suggest that there is an element of thrill-seeking involved that is likely to be due to the high stakes/risk scenarios to which HCNs are often deployed. The input of a HCN may be pivotal in whether a person lives or dies, and as such is likely to evoke a number of emotions: “...it was quite exciting to feel that you're part of something that big... if you

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<sup>1</sup> The term “subject” is utilised to refer to either a “hostage-taker” or “individual-in-crisis”, depending on the context of the hostage or crisis situation being referred to.



asked us all to be totally honest, there is that element of thrill. And buzz. And adrenalin rush that comes with it..." (G:M:4:123). One interviewee even went so far as to describe the emotions experienced as unique to the discipline:

...when you're a police officer, and you're arresting people, and you're putting them in court, it's a nice feeling and you think, great, I've done a good job today. But when you actually can say, genuinely you've saved somebody's life, it's like a whole new level, so it's a buzz that you can't get in any other area of business I don't think... You get a fantastic buzz from it, it's so unique, that there's nothing that can compare to it, nothing, in the police service (L:M:7:54).

*Feeling good from helping others* was consistently referred to by interviewees: "I always get a tremendous sense of achievement... that I've really made a difference to that person at that moment in time" (B:M:2:195). The main intention was to help people in crisis/conflict and to resolve hostage/crisis situations, however, in doing so, HCNs also experienced personal reward in the form of positive emotions. This phenomenon is well established within the counselling literature and is described as the "helpers high" (Luks, 1988). Negotiating may, therefore, serve to provide some form of longer term positive impact on HCNs' self-esteem, egos and identities, particularly as most interviewees [ $n = 10$ ] described experiencing this in some shape or form "...there have been times when I've come away and thought, I think I have saved someone's life today... and that is such a wonderful feeling..." (J:F:6:110).

**Negotiation negatives.** The second primary category that emerged related to negative components, which were categorised into three secondary categories: 'Operational issues', 'Organisational issues' and 'Personal Sacrifices'. Each secondary category was further subdivided into smaller tertiary subcategories that are described below.

*Operational issues* refer to the difficulties experienced while physically negotiating at a scene, which were categorised into four tertiary categories: ‘Operational rank/role conflict’, ‘Negotiating solo’, ‘Lack of operational discipline’ and ‘Competing tactical orientations’.

*Operational rank/role conflict.* HCNs have to work closely with tactical teams and the commanders on the ground to successfully resolve incidents. They are responsible for establishing and maintaining contact with the subject with the intention of de-escalating the subject’s emotional state and resolving the crisis situation, whereas the tactical teams are responsible for ensuring the HCNs’ safety and implementing a tactical response if required. The on-scene commander is responsible for making the decisions that oversee the whole police operation. This includes establishing perimeters and traffic control, directing the activity of the HCNs, deploying tactical teams and liaising with emergency services (Miller, 2015).

Various forms of operational rank/role conflict were reported by some interviewees [ $n = 7$ ]. Although the basic premise is that “negotiators negotiate and commanders command” (A:M:1:156; D:M:3:63), conflict often arose as a result of dual roles and a lack of clear and enforceable boundaries in relation to these roles.

...as soon as I rock up, someone says, thank God you’re here boss and what do I do?  
Well hold on, I’m not the ground commander, I’m the negotiator; I work for you in these circumstances... there is this... role, rank issue (G:M:4:123).

The majority of conflicts described appeared to have arisen due to rank/role issues. As HCNs have historically “negotiated at rank” (i.e. HCNs need to be of Sergeant/Inspector rank), this means that on many occasions, the silver commander at the scene will actually be of a lower rank than the HCN. Interviewees [ $n = 4$ ] reported that commanders often expected HCNs (of higher rank than themselves) to make command decisions, thereby resulting in conflict: “I’m an inspector. I could turn up at an incident being run by a sergeant, and he or she would then

look to me to then command the incident... and it's just not helpful..." (D:M:3:63). This rank/role conflict appears to be double sided, however, as other interviewees [ $n = 3$ ] described conflict experienced as a result of senior ranking officers taking on command roles/making command decisions despite being deployed in a HCN capacity:

Who's silver command? Sergeant so and so. Right. So he or she is in command. We've got some negotiators in this force who just don't get that... They make command decisions... It's just down to you as an individual really... I make it quite clear and always have done. That I'm there to negotiate (B:M:2:195).

*Lack of operational discipline* was also described by most interviewees [ $n = 11$ ], in terms of colleagues not behaving appropriately on scene. Two forms of disciplinary issues were identified. Firstly, some [ $n = 5$ ] referred to incidents when police officers behaved unprofessionally by saying or doing things that were not appropriate, or wanted to get involved with the negotiation: "...it may be that they [the subject] pick up on stuff from... police officers on the cordon who maybe aren't as... careful as they should be about what they say or do" (K:M:2:111). Secondly, most interviewees [ $n = 10$ ] made reference to the problems associated with a lack of effective scene control: "...poor self-discipline... it's supposed to be in a sterile, quiet room, and you are talking and other people are chipping in or pissing around..." (C:F:2:96). Sterility in this sense refers to ensuring that the subject is only communicating with the HCN(s), which is important as the involvement of third parties was highlighted as exacerbating the crisis situation and increasing risk of harm to the subject and/or hostages/victims.

...ones where you're trying to negotiate with someone, but we haven't created a sterile environment, and we've got a load of people from the estate that are also talking to him on the roof, and we haven't got the cordons up properly. That's a nightmare, and that

is where it really can go horribly wrong, because... you're speaking to them at the front of the house on the roof, their mates are speaking to... them, at the back of the house, and they're telling him to jump. And we're telling him to stay up there (A:M:1:156).

*Competing tactical orientations* was identified as the third operational issue, whereby conflict was created between 'play-it-long' HCNs and 'tactically minded' commanders who were keen to get the situation resolved as quickly as possible. HCNs are trained to utilise time as a tactic and to "play the long game" (F:M:4:111) to allow subjects' emotional arousal levels to decrease; however, commanders are often concerned with the potential impact of a long police operation on police/public costs. A similar form of operational conflict (i.e. "a unique conflict triangle" between the on-scene commander, SWAT commander and HCN commander) was identified by Vecchi (2002, p. 3) in the USA; and Norton and Petz (2012, p.31) refer to the pressure exerted by tactical teams on HCNs to "wrap this up one way or another", suggesting that this is an issue that afflicts other HCN teams. Examples of such conflict were described by most interviewees [ $n = 10$ ]: "...sometimes there will be increasing pressure for the negotiators to be used and then withdrawn, because commanders want to get the situation resolved quickly" (A:M:1:156); and these opposing thea sometimes resulted in on-scene conflict, as demonstrated by the following incident.

...we negotiated him, talked to him over a period of two or three hours and got him down to the steps... so he was... fifteen feet above us... then ... a colleague... who was... the silver commander... suddenly disappeared having been there getting quite frustrated at how slow we were at getting this bloke off the bridge. He came back and he'd been... to put on a harness with all the ropes from the fire brigade... and just suddenly started going up the steps to grab this bloke. He said, 'if you don't come down, I'm coming to get you'... the bloke decided to climb back up onto the bridge. So it took us another forty-five minutes to get him back again (B:M:2:195).

*Negotiating solo.* Protocol dictates that HCNs should never negotiate on their own, and this concept was identified early on within the literature (i.e. Fuselier, 1981, p. 13); however, due to logistical difficulties, it is often the case that HCNs attend an incident (or respond via telephone) on their own during the initial stages of deployment: “Quite often, you’d be there on your own for quite some time before another one turned up” (K:M:2:111). Having to negotiate with a subject without any support (or a “number 2”) was described by some [ $n = 5$ ] as a negative experience that goes against the grain of the team ethos and resulted in HCNs experiencing stress due to feeling isolated: “...that’s... where your back up is needed. Because I have been on my own quite a bit... it is, that immense, you’re thinking everything is on me” (H:F:5:50); “And I was on my own... That was really hard... you could feel your stress level rising, because I’m thinking... where’s my support? (C:F:2:96).

***Organisational issues.*** Issues that HCNs experienced as a result of organisational structure, policies or procedures were categorised into four tertiary categories: ‘Dual role conflict’, ‘Lack of awareness and support within the force’, ‘Lack of professionalisation and standardisation of the discipline’ and ‘Negotiation as a Cinderella role’.

*Dual role conflict.* HCNs are on-call alongside their normal role duties, which inevitably means that they are deployed at some point during their “normal” working hours. Most interviewees [ $n = 14$ ] stated that this caused difficulties: “...when the negotiator job conflicts with your day-to-day deadlines, which sometimes you can’t miss... it’s really hard” (C:F:2:96). One interviewee referred to this as a form of “role corruption” (F:M:4:111) that resulted in stress from trying to manage the two roles simultaneously: “I do get called out, and it can be more than once a night... then I’ve got... kidnapping/extortion cover. And all my force nights cover for a full tour of duties, for a week... and then you’ve got your own job to do” (O:F:9:36). One interviewee referred to having to keep “spinning those plates” in terms

of the “double hatting” they perform (E:M:3:114); and others made reference to tension caused within the workplace/conflict with their superiors/managers:

...being instructed to something else such as a negotiator incident that is not necessarily in your immediate line manager’s area of responsibility, depending on how long you’re away for, can be... not positively viewed... When you get called out in the middle of the night and you’re not available to come in the following day because you’ve been up all night, they have to try and find somebody to try and backfill (E:M:3:114).

*Lack of awareness and support within the force.* Although every UK police force has a cadre of HCNs and force policy dictates that HCNs are consulted and deployed in certain situations (e.g. firearms incidents) (Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO] *et al.*, 2011), most interviewees [ $n = 9$ ] referred to a general lack of awareness about the role: “...there’s still... a lack of understanding about what it [negotiation] is. Some people... watch it on Hollywood blockbuster movies and think, that looks the business that does, but the reality is somewhat different” (L:M:7:54). This included a lack of recognition amongst colleagues about the benefit of utilising HCNs and a lack of budgetary support from the force that amalgamated to produce an overall feeling of a lack of organisational understanding, awareness and support. This was described by some [ $n = 4$ ] as having a direct impact on the utilisation and deployment of HCNs, whereby control room staff either failed to deploy them when needed, or deployed them when it was not appropriate to do so:

...on occasions we do miss incidents that a negotiator should have been called... and... that’s not critical against one particular person, it’s just the realities of life that sometimes there’s quite a lot of changeover, into the control rooms, and some people won’t be aware of the fact that there’s negotiators and what... role they carry out... (A:M:1:156).

*Lack of standardisation and professionalisation of the discipline.* Protocol in terms of how HCNs should be selected, deployed, quality assured and supported differed across forces, and was dependent on force ethos, policies and procedures (and to some extent the attitudes of the Chief Constable and Force HCN Lead). This was described by some [ $n = 5$ ] as problematic as it often meant that HCNs were operating differently across forces. Some interviewees suggested a need for the selection processes to be nationally standardised and for assessors to be appropriately trained: "...you are using assessors who are assessing new candidates who might not be... quality assured... you know, not trained... They're just... negotiators" (C:F:2:96). Another commented on the lack of standardisation across the training courses which he felt was potentially problematic: "...I think we need the regional courses to be standardised... and I think there needs to be some clarity about whether or not they are a course which feeds into the national [course] or not" (K:M:2:111). One interviewee also felt that courses would benefit from having an internally and externally validated accredited status in order to enhance professionalisation of the discipline, and that HCNn should be standardised in line with other police specialisms (i.e. firearms and public order) (A:M:1:156).

...it's mandated... now that if you... become a detective or if you become a PCSO, that you'll be trained to national standards and they will be assessed, so it's all quality assured and there's internal verification, and there's external verification, it's all professionalised. I think that's a good thing, and that would be the one thing... there should be in place for negotiators (B:M:2:195).

There were also discrepancies in the way that HCNs recorded their deployment activities across different forces; however, work was being done to try and rectify this issue: "I was lucky enough to go last week to the national negotiator group and talk about trying to standardise... data returns following deployment" (E:M:3:114) and since the data were collected changes have been implemented in terms of establishing a centrally organised

database for all UK police forces to record deployments using the same standardised electronic deployment form.

*Negotiation as a Cinderella role.* In the majority of forces (with the exception of a couple of metropolitan forces), the HCN role is a voluntary one that is performed alongside, or in addition to, officer day-to-day police roles. The specifics of remuneration differ from force to force, with some HCNs receiving no financial remuneration, others receiving some form of small additional payment and others receiving payment in terms of “overtime” if they were below an Inspector rank. HCNn was frequently referred to as a “Cinderella role” or a “Cinderella service”; phrases that are used within police circles to describe a voluntary/additional role that is perceived as being less important and less valued than other police specialisms.

Most interviewees [ $n = 11$ ] referred to the lack of tangible recognition and financial remuneration and specified that it would be nice to receive some (or more) remuneration in recognition for their services. Some [ $n = 5$ ] also felt undervalued/unappreciated by the force (particularly the management), despite feeling that they were performing a vital role that often involved deploying when they were off duty and during unsociable hours: “...there was a reward payment that some officers get... And we never, ever got that payment, and it was just left to us doing it down to good will... So I don’t think up that level we get appreciated” (C:F:2:96). One interviewee described the thanks for doing the role as “intermittent” (E:M:3:114) and another stated “I don’t think the force recognises negotiators much at all...” (G:M:4:123). Others described the disappointment they felt in association with the lack of substantive recognition received from their superiors: “There could be... some better reward and recognition for us...” (B:M:2:195).



HCNn was also consistently referred to as a specialism that was considered to be a lower priority within the ‘pecking order’ of police specialist areas; with one interviewee describing it as the “poor relative” (H:F:5:50) in relation to other specialisms/specialist divisions. This perception was linked by some [ $n = 4$ ] to the limited budgetary support provided by the force: “...because it’s almost an add-on, it’s not something that the force thinks, right, this... is a priority... So, therefore, we get a smaller budget” (N:F:8:34). The fact that HCNn is performed alongside officers’ core responsibilities meant that HCNs were unable to dedicate themselves fully to the role and it was often perceived as a “secondary function” (L:M:7:54) or a “bolt-on” (E:M:3:114) to their day jobs. It was described by one interviewee as an “extracurricular activity” (F:M:4:111) and by another as a “hobby” (A:M:1:156) and interviewees gave the impression that their HCN role did not always dovetail neatly with their core policing role: “It’s an adjunct to our everyday duties, it doesn’t fit well, at all...” (F:M:4:111).

***Personal sacrifices.*** Most interviewees [ $n = 11$ ] described experiencing some form of personal sacrifice arising from the on-call commitments, unsociable hours and urgency of deployment, and two tertiary categories were identified within this category: ‘Disruption to family life’ and ‘Impact on personal and social life’.

***Disruption to family life.*** HCNs often have to “walk out of the door and leave family commitments behind” (I:M:6:84) and some [ $n = 7$ ] described difficulties associated with having to renege on family commitments. Others referred to the negative feelings associated with disturbing family members when they were deployed: “...there’s personal difficulties... you know, disturbing the family’s sleep as I’m coming and going” (G:M:4:123) and the feeling of letting family members down due to not being able to “go anywhere or do anything” (J:F:6:110) as a result of being on call: “I’ve been in town with my family... having a meal,

and having to... put them in a taxi and then go off to... help somebody out. So huge... I don't think there's anything that recognises the impact on the individuals" (F:M:4:111).

*Impact on personal and social life.* Some interviewees [ $n = 5$ ] described the adverse impact on their social lives, whereby they would often not be able to consume alcohol or would have to turn down offers to socialise to ensure that they were safe to drive if deployed to an incident: "...when you're on call, no we can't go to that party, no we can't go outside the force, I've got to stay dry" (G:M:4:123). The role was, therefore, conceptualised as one which restricted them socially and negatively impacted on their personal/social life: "It's a huge demand on you... and it impacts on your personal life... when you're on call. All your mates are down the pub and you're sat watching East Enders or whatever, it can be a bit rubbish" (L:M:7:54).

**Negotiation ambivalences.** The final primary category related to elements of the HCN experience that contained aspects with both positive and negative polarisations. The 'Negotiator ambivalences' category contained two secondary categories which are discussed below: 'Negotiator stress/eustress' and 'The evolution of negotiation as an entity'.

*Negotiator stress/eustress.* Despite having to perform a highly challenging role that often involved dealing with life or death situations, HCNs tended to display an air of ambivalence about "stress" experienced in this context. Not only were there contradictions in terms of HCNs experiencing or not experiencing stress; the stress experienced was also explained in somewhat contradictory terms, thereby demonstrating ambivalence on two levels. Some interviewees [ $n = 5$ ] felt that negotiation was not stressful; whereas others ( $n = 10$ ) reported having experienced stress during their role (albeit in different forms). The latter group tended to either conceptualise stress in the form of "eustress"<sup>2</sup> whereby they felt that HCNn

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<sup>2</sup> Eustress (n.d.) is defined as "moderate or normal psychological stress interpreted as being beneficial for the experienter".

provided them with a challenge that often resulted in a combination of both positive (eustress) and negative stress, or described the emotions associated with negotiating as “a different type of stress”, somehow lessening the perceived impact of this stress.

*Negotiation as non-stressful.* One third of interviewees [ $n = 5$ ] felt that the role did not cause them to experience any form of stress. Some were fairly “matter-of-fact” about this: “Well, I don’t personally get any stress from doing the negotiating stuff...” (N:F:8:34) and others provided fairly succinct answers with little elaboration: IV: “Do you ever kind of experience stress or anxiety as a result of actually negotiating?” IE: “I haven’t so far” (M:F:8:24). One interviewee described a process of reflection that he often went through after an incident had been resolved, which sometimes resulted in him questioning his actions and reflecting upon whether he could have responded differently, but was adamant that this process did not cause him any stress: “No... I don’t feel stressed” (O:F:9:36). Another related the lack of stress he experienced to the confidence in his ability to negotiate or act as a HNC at an incident, implying that confidence plays a role in stress perception for some HCNs:

...I don’t feel any stress when I’m negotiating; I really don’t. I know the tactic that I want to employ; I know the route I want to go down or I want to direct my team down... so I don’t feel any stress when I’m either negotiating or supervising the team (I:M:6:84).

*Negotiator eustress.* Some reported experiencing stress but tended to conceptualise this as “eustress” as opposed to conventional “stress”, thereby giving it a positive rather than a negative connotation/polarisation. For some [ $n = 3$ ], negotiation was conceptualised as a challenge, as opposed to something that caused stress *per se*: “...it’s different. No, it’s a challenge. It’s not a stress... No, I wouldn’t say it was stressful” (C:F:2:96); and for others [ $n = 3$ ], they felt that the role involved the manifestation of a combination of both negative and positive stress; with the positive stress often counteracting the effects of the negative stress:

...yes, I do [experience stress]. So you're putting yourself on offer. But equally there's the argument to say that in the vast majority of situations when the matter's resolved, you're getting a lot of positive stress, so it's like a blooming cup... you've got a load of negative here, but the potential is it's actually all going to be smiles (A:M:1:156).

*Negotiation as a "different type of stress".* HCNs frequently encountered highly pressurised situations that involved high-risk decision-making with a potential risk of harm or fatality to those involved. These types of scenario would typically induce stress within most individuals, however, the experience was consistently conceptualised by most interviewees [ $n = 10$ ] as being "different" to the stress experienced within other domains of their lives. Some [ $n = 3$ ] described the stress experienced from negotiating as less intense/severe than the stress experienced in their day jobs:

"...somewhat perversely, I think although negotiating is always a crisis... I don't find that it stresses me out really as much as the frustrations of any day-to-day... issues that you might come across. Poor leadership and poor management really stresses me out..." (B:M:2:195).

Whereas others [ $n = 3$ ] felt the reverse:

...absolutely poles apart... my everyday life... at work, is busy. It's not at all stressful, not in comparison with some of the bits that I do... I've been in far more stressful situations, with people throwing knives at me... and bottles at me, while I'm trying to talk them out of a situation... (G:M:4:123).

And some [ $n = 2$ ] felt that the stress was different but equal in terms of intensity: "I don't think one is greater than the other, I think it's just a totally different dynamic" (L:M:7:54). These disparities are likely to reflect individual differences between HCNs, whereby they perceive

and respond to stress differently in line with their experiences and individual coping mechanisms.

Negotiation was also conceptualised as different as a result of the intensity and duration of the stress experienced. Some [ $n = 4$ ] described the stress as intense but short-lived. This high intensity, low duration (i.e. acute as opposed to chronic) stress was utilised as a justification for the stress not having too much of an impact on them in terms of their emotional wellbeing and functioning:

It's a different kind of stress really... Being a negotiator is stressful at the time you are doing the negotiation, but... realistically, I deal with fifteen to twenty incidents a year, whereby I deploy... how many of those are over fairly quickly... probably another half again. So I'm talking about three or four that can become... very emotionally intense, difficult, long running (E:M:3:114).

*The evolution of negotiation as an entity* was discussed in light of a range of HCN experience/service levels (2-16 years). Interviewee reflections were painted in a combination of both positive and negative lights, with some feeling that changes had had a positive impact on the discipline and others feeling that the changes were potentially detrimental. This category was further subdivided into three tertiary sub-categories which are discussed below: 'Changes in deployment nature and frequency', 'The impact of Taser on negotiation deployment' and 'Broader use of communication media within negotiation'.

*Changes in deployment nature and frequency* were reported by interviewees, particularly those with longer service [ $n = 7$ ]. A minority [ $n = 2$ ] felt that they were now dealing with a broader range of deployments and some [ $n = 7$ ] also felt that the type of incident they typically responded to had changed in terms of situational characteristics. Interviewees

exemplified this with reference to more involvement with missing persons (MISPERs) and public order work (i.e. protests/marches/demonstrations).

...I think it's changed in that we've... tried to promote ourselves as, if you need anything for MISPERs and the like... people that you feel are in crisis, it might be a telephone call as opposed to that come out and do a face-to-face... (J:F:6:110).

HCNs also described acting as “protest liaison officers” (N:F:8:34) in planned protests/demonstrations/marches to establish rules of engagement with the protest organisers and ensure that the protest remains peaceful:

If we've got... a group we know are going to come and protest in a particular area, and we fear there's going to be an adverse reaction, one way or another, because of that protest, then, increasingly, we're getting negotiators involved in that to try and facilitate... a better outcome for all parties (D:M:3:63).

There is no doubt that the skills possessed by HCNs can be utilised in a broad variety of settings and it may be that their skills are being underutilised. One interviewee referred to the potential use of HCNs as “in-force mediators to mediate for conflict resolutions” (A:M:1:156), an idea which may gain momentum in the future. Despite a perceived increase in breadth of deployment, there was also a strong feeling amongst some interviewees [ $n = 6$ ] that the number and frequency of deployments had decreased: “...there's an anecdotal feeling that it's dropped off a bit... anecdotally, it always felt like it was... two or three calls a week, I'd get... now, one or two, and sometimes... I've had some weeks with no calls, at all” (F:M:4:111).

*The impact of Taser on negotiation deployment.* Taser<sup>3</sup> was introduced in 2004 for use by authorised firearms officers (AFOs) and was extended to use by specially trained units in 2008 (Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO], 2013). “Taser provides an additional option to resolve situations, including the threat of violence, which can come from any section of the public” (Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO], 2013) and is used as an alternative to other physical tactical options, such as physical restraint, and the use of police dogs or batons. Interviewees felt that this had a direct impact on the nature and frequency of their deployment, with almost half [ $n = 7$ ] reporting a decrease in the number of call outs they received: “So with the advent of Taser, that’s seen a reduction in the number of negotiating incidents, because the police officers at the scene are able to deal with it adequately, quickly, and safely by the use of Taser” (A:M:1:156). Some [ $n = 5$ ] also reported a change in the nature of their deployments: “so without a doubt, there are some... types of job, which are on the decrease” (G:M:4:123); whereby they were less likely to be deployed to barricade or domestic siege scenarios because Taser was seen as a quicker (and sometimes more efficient/cheaper) solution to this type of incident (as opposed to a potentially lengthy and protracted negotiation): “...two minutes after we arrive, he’s been zapped, and he’s subdued, and that’s the end of it” (F:M:4:111).

*Broader use of communication media within negotiation.* Historically, HCNn has generally been conducted face-to-face or voice-to-voice (via telephone); however, advances in communication technology have resulted in HCNs ( $n = 5$ ) utilising a variety of different communication methods, including text message, email and social networking sites (SNSs) in addition to the traditional methods of communication. HCNs have had to “move with the

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<sup>3</sup> The Taser (conducted energy device) is a single shot device designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through use of an electrical current which temporarily interferes with the body’s neuromuscular system (College of Policing, 2014a).

times” in order to communicate with individuals in crisis, particularly those of the younger generation who are more likely to engage in text messaging or chatting on SNSs.

As we sit here now, there’s probably... maybe half a dozen high-risk missing persons in [anonymised location] alone... A lot of those... we could have an intervention with them by a phone call. Or a text... Remember some of the technology’s changed as well. I’ve found that I’ve ended up carrying out part of negotiations via text... Email... Facebook... all of that is a massive change from when I started certainly (B:M:2:195).

One interviewee (K:M:2:111) also referred to electronic communication being perceived as providing individuals who are committing a crime with a form of anonymity, whereby extortionists may believe that their actions are less traceable as a result of email (as opposed to telephone) communication. He referred specifically to an increase in deployment to/involvement with extortion/sextortion cases involving threats to disclose personally damaging information via the internet and indicated that HCNs were now having to work with cases that solely involved communication via electronic/digital media:

Yes, we’re finding more of those internet-related now where people are engaging in sexual activity, it’s being filmed on the internet and then... This film’s going to be released; it’s going to be sent to everyone on your Facebook account... So you’re getting those types of jobs now, which we haven’t seen before (K:M:2:111).

## **Discussion**

This model provides a unique insight into the experiences of police HCNs from an operational, professional and personal perspective. The findings present valuable opportunities for organisational learning and have enabled the authors to make various recommendations for changes to HCN policy and practice that are discussed below (and synthesised within Table 1). To begin with, it is clear that being a HCN can be an incredibly positive experience, with the



discipline being perceived as both personally and professionally rewarding. Some HCNs identified the role as being their core reason for coming to work, thereby further attesting to the rewarding nature of the role for some officers. Others identified the rewards associated with the HCN role as being unique to the discipline and these findings highlight the benefits and added value that HCNs felt as a result of being part of the cadre. These findings provide justification for the existence of the HCN role, which is mutually beneficial, both for subjects who are in crisis/conflict and the HCNs whose job it is to resolve these situations. As such, aspects of the model could be used within recruitment strategies as a means of promoting/encouraging officers to apply for the role.

In contrast, the negatives identified indicate that there is scope for improvement within the discipline, allowing a number of recommendations to be made in relation to HCN policy and practice. A number of recommendations relate to the concept of “awareness raising” in relation to the HCN discipline. Firstly, it would be prudent to try to differentiate the roles of HCN/commander more clearly by educating and training non-HCN staff on the HCN role and remit. Such training may help to avoid operational rank/role conflict on scene (i.e., to ensure that both parties stick to the “negotiators negotiate and commanders command rule”). Wind (1995) clarified the role of the field commander in critical incidents and Noesner (1999) addressed negotiation concepts for commanders, thereby identifying similar conflict issues that have been dealt with in the USA. Similar methods could be introduced in the UK to help enhance the operational efficiency of HCN deployments and avoid rank/role conflict issues in the future.

Secondly, raising awareness of the benefits of using HCNs within the firearms ‘world’ and trying to educate firearms commanders/teams in terms of why HCNs play the “long game” and how negotiation can successfully resolve situations without the need for tactical intervention, may be beneficial. A similar approach has been suggested by Vecchi (2002) in

the USA, whereby the potential for conflict is likely to be reduced by acknowledging the importance and legitimacy of both HCN and firearms teams and fostering relationships between them. One way of facilitating this relationship would be for both teams to train together on a regular basis, to enhance intra-team and cross-discipline (i.e. inter-team) working and relationships.

Thirdly, the authors suggest that there is a need to raise awareness of the HCN role within forces generally, and that internal “public relations and marketing” associated with the role could be enhanced so that control room operators and duty inspectors are aware of the benefit of utilising HCNs and the appropriate incidents in which to deploy them. Part of this could also involve training first responders/uniformed officers in terms of the HCNn procedures/protocol (and in particular highlighting the importance of scene control/maintenance of a sterile environment). Overall, greater internal publicising of the work that HCNs do may also help to enhance awareness of the role within the force and to encourage financial and general support for HCNs.

There is also scope for organisational change when considering remuneration/recognition for HCNs. Whilst it may not be financially possible/feasible to enhance the financial remuneration HCNs receive, the findings indicate that it is recognition and feeling valued by the organisation that are perceived as more important forms of remuneration by HCNs themselves. Enhancing recognition of the work that HCNs do, by superiors acknowledging the number of incidents that the cadre have successfully resolved on an annual basis may be one way to do this. Annual provision of a certificate for individual HCNs would also allow them to keep a formal record of their deployments and could be utilised within appraisal/personal development procedures. Simply raising awareness of the nature of the role (and the work that HCNs do on top of their daily tasks) within the higher echelons of the organisation may help to encourage the greater recognition and remuneration that is desired

by HCNs. Increased internal recognition of the importance of the role and greater appreciation of the work that HCNs do would also help to negate some of the personal sacrifices that HCNs make when performing the role.

In a similar vein, better budgetary support would help HCNs to feel valued and supported within their role. Whilst this does not necessarily mean increased individual financial remuneration, the provision of an increased budget would allow cadres to be provided with appropriate equipment (i.e. clothing, recording equipment etc.) and it would also enable greater opportunities for HCNs to undergo CPD and/or specific training events which are likely to have a positive impact on their negotiation performance. Similarly, whilst it is not feasible to suggest that all HCNs be employed in a full-time capacity in the UK, increasing awareness, recognition and remuneration for HCNs would go some way to alleviate the negativities associated with HCNs being viewed as a “Cinderella service”. Without HCNs, there is no doubt that many individuals would die, or be seriously injured. On this basis, it is commonsensical to suggest that the role should be given more credence within the policing arena and HCNs should be credited more highly for the work that they do.

From an operational perspective, there is evidence to suggest that HCNs function best and manage stress more effectively when they have a connection to their team and their peers (Greenstone, 2004), with a suggestion that the primary and secondary HCN model typically utilised, acts as a strong stress management tool (Norton and Petz, 2012). When considering this in line with the current findings, they suggest that attempts should be made to ensure that HCNs are deployed in pairs (where logistically possible) and that the length of time that primary HCNs are negotiating on their own is minimised so as to reduce the pressure/stress experienced as a result of “negotiating solo”. Such efforts would ensure that HCNs are provided with the best possible environment in which to perform their role.

There is also scope to enhance both professionalisation and standardisation of the discipline in a number of ways. Firstly, standardisation of the procedures that are utilised to recruit, select, train and support HCNs is warranted. This would involve ensuring that selection criteria and training processes are standardised across all forces. It would also involve ensuring that all HCNs receive a standardised accredited training course, which is (ideally) accredited by an external institution/organisation, to ensure that both regional and national training courses are working to the same curriculum. Similarly, standardisation of the deployment logs and recording processes would allow for better empirical comparison of deployments and *ergo* enable a statistical/epidemiological picture of the nature and extent of UK HCNn to be developed. A standardisation of the HCN deployment recording process has, in fact, recently been implemented, with an electronically managed secure online platform now being used by the majority of the 43 forces in the UK ensuring that all HCN deployments are recorded in the same standardised manner. This development has now resulted in the first centrally managed National Negotiator Deployment Database of its kind internationally. Unlike the well-known HOBAS database managed by the FBI in the US, the UK-based database contains data pertaining to all HCN deployments (and is therefore not subjected to the criticisms associated with bias and self-selected recording that has previously plagued the HOBAS system). The standardisation of deployment recording will have immense benefits to the discipline as a result of being able to inform the training and CPD of HCNs using an evidence base (thereby meeting the needs of the requirement for more emphasis on evidence-based policing, as suggested by the College of Policing (2014b) Five Year Strategy document).

Findings in relation to the negotiation ambivalences category suggest that the discipline of HCNn has evolved over the past ten-fifteen years and is likely to evolve further in the future. As such, HCNs need to be flexible in terms of adapting to the ever changing 'terrain' that they may be exposed to, facilitated via ongoing CPD that equips them to respond to evolving

incident characteristics. They also need to be able to respond to subjects utilising a variety of different communication methods (i.e. text, email, social networking/chat) and would, therefore, benefit from bespoke training which addresses the use of said communication methods. Lastly, it would be prudent to work with HCNs further in terms of identifying whether stress is an issue and whether resiliency training/bespoke coping skills training would be beneficial for some/all HCNs. Grossman and Christensen (2004, p. 35) referred to the concept of “stress inoculation” whereby “prior success under stressful conditions acclimatises you to similar situations and promotes future success”, suggesting that bespoke forms of stress inoculation training within the HCN context could be beneficial.

Whilst the research questions addressed as part of this research aligned sympathetically with a qualitative research design, the findings are of course, somewhat limited by the fact that they are dependent on the interviewees’ memory/interpretation of experiences. Similarly, it is worth bearing in mind that social desirability and impression management may have played a role within the realities presented by the interviewees. When considering the concept of stress, for example, the police service has historically been perceived as having a macho culture (Chan, 1997; Reiner, 2010), whereby officers desire to be perceived as strong and efficient enforcers of the law. This type of environment is, therefore, likely to play a role in whether an interviewee feels able to disclose feeling stressed within the workplace within an interview setting, and it may be that the experience of stress has been underreported as a result of this.

It is also important to acknowledge the authors’ unique position in terms of being granted access to a population (i.e. police officers) that has historically been difficult to access by researchers (Kraska & Paulsen, 1997) and the fact that the lead researcher spent several years engaging with the research participants and fully immersing herself in the research process. As a result of this, it is impossible to completely avoid personal bias (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007), even though it may be both inadvertent and benevolent. In order to pre-

emptively counter/minimise the existence of bias, a number of techniques were utilised (as guided by Shenton, 2004 and Tong et al., 2007), including 1) participant validation of interview transcripts, 2) member checks/interviewee validation of developed models, 3) review/discussion of findings and models with co-authors (including a co-author who had previously worked as a HCN), and 4) scrutiny of the study's findings by peers at conferences which enabled refinement of the model and strengthening of arguments. Future research may also benefit from the inclusion of a pilot study which enables the interview schedule to be tested and refined and allows the researcher(s) to practice interview technique to ensure that the data collected within the study "proper" is as unbiased, rich and detailed as possible.

Whilst the findings help to provide some initial insight into the world of HCNn and the HCN experience, additional research is required that triangulates the findings herein, using observation of live/training scenarios to enhance the overall credibility of the model developed. Similarly, it would be informative to examine the cross-cultural validity of the model. An Anglo-American model, for example, that explores the potential similarities and differences in HCN experiences from both a professional and personal perspective, would help to understand whether the role has different meanings for UK/USA-based HCNs and identify whether HCNs in the USA experience the same difficulties from an organisational/operational context. It may be, for example, that HCNs based in the US (who pioneered the discipline of HCNn) have developed more effective systems/protocols to deal with any 'negotiation negatives', and as such, may provide guidance that can be followed in the UK to enhance the HCN experience. Similarly, it may be that we can learn from other countries in terms of how to avoid/minimise the impact of any organisational/operational issues by exploring HCN experiences within a variety of individualistic (i.e. western) and collectivist (i.e. non-western) cultures. Research in this vein may eventually help to enhance the efficacy of HCNn as a police tool, by helping us

to understand the role more fully and to utilise the experiences of those who perform the role to enhance evidence-based policing within the HCNn arena.

The current model provides a unique “snap-shot” into the lives of police officers who perform a complex but vital task in order to save the lives of individuals involved in hostage or crisis scenarios. The findings provide insight into a previously un-researched area and have been utilised to highlight potential organisational learning and make a number of recommendations relating to HCN practice and policy that will hopefully benefit both HCNs and police organisations alike.

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Table 1

*Table Synopsising the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Categories within the Hostage and Crisis Negotiator Experience Model and Implications for Organisational Learning, Policy and Practice*

Primary categories	Secondary categories	Tertiary categories	Implications for organisational learning/HCN policy and practice
Negotiation positives	The negotiator family	Cadre as supportive	Could be used to enhance PR in relation to HCNn and encourage recruitment of trainee HCNs
		Camaderie and comradeship	Could be used to enhance PR in relation to HCNn and encourage recruitment of trainee HCNs
		Negotiation as a team discipline	Could be used to highlight importance of team fit and team work within HCN trainee selection policies/training programmes
	Negotiation as personally and professionally rewarding	Negotiation as challenging	Could be used to encourage recruitment of trainee HCNs and promote the benefits of the role internally
		Opportunity for public interface and interaction	Could be used to encourage recruitment of trainee HCNs and promote the benefits of the role internally to officers with more managerial positions and less operational policing roles (i.e. high-ranking officers/training staff etc.)
		Negotiation as emotionally rewarding	Could be used to enhance PR in relation to HCNn and encourage recruitment of trainee HCNs
Negotiation negatives	Operational issues	Feeling good from helping others	Could be used to enhance PR in relation to HCNn and encourage recruitment of trainee HCNs
		Operational rank/role conflict	Could be used to educate/train police personnel and raise awareness (including those performing command duties) in relation to the HCN role/remit
		Lack of operational discipline	Could be used to educate/train front line officers in relation to the importance of operational discipline when in attendance at HCN incidents
		Competing tactical orientations	Could be used to educate firearms officers/commanders in relation to the reasons for the HCN approach (i.e. the “long game”) and to encourage better team work from HCNs/AFOs
		Negotiating solo	Could be used to inform policy relating to HCN deployment and avoid solo deployment



	Organisational issues	Dual role conflict	Could be used to educate senior managers/raise awareness of the importance of HCNs/the HCN role to help minimise dual role conflict
		Lack of awareness and support within the force	Could be used to educate/train police personnel (i.e. call handlers/control room operators/duty inspectors) in relation to the importance of the HCN role and encourage appropriate deployment of HCNs
		Lack of standardisation and professionalisation of the discipline	Could be used to inform policy in relation to HCNn as a police discipline (i.e. standardised recording of deployments and standardised delivery of accredited training)
		Negotiation as a Cinderella role	Could be used to promote the importance of HCNs internally (i.e. enhance internal PR) and promote the work that they do to save lives
	Personal sacrifices	Disruption to family life	Could be used to demonstrate the commitment that HCNs make in order to help others – this could help to enhance internal recognition/promote remuneration for HCNs
		Impact on personal/social life	Could be used to demonstrate the commitment that HCNs make in order to help others – this could help to enhance internal recognition/promote remuneration for HCNs
Negotiation ambivalences	Negotiator stress/eustress	Negotiation as non-stressful	Could be used to inform future research to explore the role of stress within HCN practice further
		Negotiator eustress	Could be used to inform future research to explore the role of stress within HCN/identify whether resilience/stress-inoculation training would be beneficial to HCNs
		Negotiation as a “different type of stress”	Could be used to inform future research to explore the role of stress within HCN/identify whether resilience/stress-inoculation training would be beneficial to HCNs
	The evolution of negotiation as an entity	Changes in deployment frequency and nature	Could be used to inform policy relating to standardisation of deployments to enable research to be performed to measure trends/patterns in deployment frequency/nature
		Impact of Taser on negotiation deployment Broader use of communication mediums within negotiation	Could be used to inform discussions about appropriate use of Taser and inform policy if necessary Could be used to highlight the importance of CPD/training to ensure HCNs are equipped to deal with evolving incident characteristics and communication technology